

Yuri Polyakov

BY THE WILL OF THE PEOPLES



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**Formation of the Union
of Soviet Socialist Republics—
Lenin's Ideas Realized**



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Translated from the Russian by *Valentin KOCHETKOV*
Translation edited by *Peter TEMPEST*

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FOREWORD

December 30 is a festive day for Soviet people because on that day in 1922 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was founded.

Some readers who know that Russian Revolution took place in 1917 may wonder why the USSR was established so much later, fully five years later? What sort of Soviet state existed from 1917 to 1922? How changes in the composition and structure of the USSR came about in the years that followed?

This booklet sets out to answer these questions.

It is important to realize how many different nationalities and ethnic groups live in the land of the Soviets. One must know how people lived before the revolution, the oppression they were subjected to, and how they fought to be free.

The peoples of Russia who carried out a great revolution in order to build a new and just society faced countless difficulties.

They had not only to defend the Revolution, to defeat the desperate attempts by the overthrown exploiting classes to restore the old way of life, attempts which brought about a Civil War. They not only had to repel armed invasion by the forces of international reaction which backed the old ruling classes. They had to end oppression and national inequality forever, to ensure for all the peoples of the country full scope for free all-round development and to create new forms of state structure that would secure this.

It was incredibly difficult to establish a single state system that could heed and meet the interests of all

the country's large and small, developed and backward nations, nationalities and ethnic groups, and bring them together in a single organic community bound by common tasks and ideals.

Yet this task was successfully accomplished and within a historically short space of time. The importance of studying this experience is indisputable, because at one stage or another in their history other countries and peoples face many of the problems that Soviet Russia faced in 1917.

There are about 2,000 different nations and ethnic groups on our planet. Almost all of them—90 per cent—live in multi-national or multi-tribal states. So questions of state structure are of interest to peoples in all parts of the world. It may be said without fear of exaggeration that inter-communal strife in states has been and remains a major source of instability in the world. There have been very many multi-national states in history—the ancient empires of the Achaemenids and of Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire which embraced peoples and tribes dwelling in the vast Mediterranean area and more recently the patchwork Austro-Hungarian Empire in the centre of Europe.

But in none of these states was there anything resembling equality of the peoples based on unselfish mutual assistance. There always were certain privileged peoples who dominated and exploited the others.

In our age many attempts have been made to solve the nationalities question, but history shows that the road the Soviet Union took, that of *socialist federalism*, is the most effective.

Socialist federalism as a state structure has proved remarkably viable. The most important aspect of it is the way it takes into consideration and harmoniously combines the interests of the whole community, of the country as a whole, with the interests of each of the nations and nationalities dwelling in it.

This was accomplished because the national emancipation which the October Revolution initiated was based on fundamental economic and social transformations; because the working people of different nationalities, prompted by the community of their social aims, came to realize the necessity for union and mutual assistance; because the more developed peoples in the country gave all the aid they could to the less developed ones; because many quests, theoretical discussions

and practical tests led to the discovery and establishment of entirely new, hitherto unknown forms of national-state structure.

There is an Oriental saying that hours walk, days run and years fly. Years do indeed fly, and fly swiftly. Sixty-five years have passed since the October Socialist Revolution and sixty years since the founding of the USSR. These years have witnessed many historic events. Great testing times fell to the lot of the USSR. But far from weakening the country and the unity of the peoples dwelling in it, they proved the strength and viability of the union of the peoples and strengthened this union.

This booklet describes how the various Soviet Socialist Republics arose and developed on the lands of the former Russian Empire, how they joined together in a single union and how this union has grown and gained strength.

I

EARLY THIS CENTURY

HOW MANY NATIONS LIVED IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE?

This is not an easy question to answer. Russia had long been a multi-national state. At the beginning of the 20th century its population included scores of peoples at markedly different stages of economic, social and cultural development. Some were still at the stage of feudalism, while the small nationalities of the North and the Far East had not yet emerged from patriarchal-tribal society, that is to say, they were many centuries behind most of the peoples of Europe. So it was only natural that there were tribes and many ethnic groups which did not form a single nationality and were even still unaware of their national identity.

Pre-revolutionary statistics, which did not attempt strictly to determine national affiliation, emphasized divisions along religious and linguistic lines, which far from always coincide with national divisions. Many peoples did not figure at all in official data. The more than twenty small nationalities of the North such as the Nentsi, Chukchis, Evenks, Nanais, Khanties and Mansis were vaguely and rather mysteriously called "Hyperboreans" or scornfully referred to as *Samoyeds* (self-eaters). The people living in many mountain villages and districts of Tajikistan in Central Asia regarded themselves as belonging to a particular clan or tribe, not as Tajiks, although in language, origin and principal traditions they were in fact Tajiks.

The first reliable data about the national composition of the whole country were gathered by Soviet statisticians. Since on the whole the national composition is the same as on the eve of the October 1917 Revolution, though the numbers of

particular peoples have, of course, changed, these data can be regarded as answering one of our first questions.¹

What was the composition of the population? Since the old statisticians were not quite clear as to who was who, they could not precisely determine the size of the various groups. We shall rely on modern data and base our calculations on the territory that lay within the borders of the country in 1922, the year the USSR was formed.

In 1917 this territory was inhabited by 147,600,000 people.

The *Russians* (77,700,000) were the largest in number. They mostly lived in the European part of Russia—from the North-West frontier of the Baltic coast to the Urals, from the Arctic seas to the southern steppes. In the districts of Central Russia (Moscow and the surrounding *gubernias*²) and North-West Russia (Petrograd,³ Novgorod and Pskov) and Northern Russia (Vyatka,⁴ Vologda and Archangel). Russians formed, and still form today, the absolute and compact majority of the population.

In the region of the Middle Volga and the foothills of the Urals *Tatars, Bashkirs, Mordvinians, Chuvashes* and *Udmurts* live along with Russians, while the boundless expanses of the Urals, Siberia and the Soviet Far East are inhabited by *Yakuts, Buryats* and such peoples as *Udighes, Evenks, Chukchis* and many others who number very few.

The southern part of Russia bordering on the Black Sea is predominantly inhabited by the *Ukrainians*, the second largest Slav people. In 1922 they numbered 30,400,000 while the *Byelorussians* living in the West on the border with Poland numbered 4,200,000. In Transcaucasia, on the borders with Turkey and Iran, live such peoples as the *Armenians, Georgians* and *Azerbaijanians*, while the mountains and val-

¹ According to the January 1979 Census there are more than 100 large and small peoples. They include *Slavs* (Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians), *Turkic-language groups* (Azerbaijanians, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmen, Kirghizes, Kara-Kalpaks, Tatars, Bashkirs and others), *Persian-speaking peoples* (Tajiks and Ossetians), *Ugro-Finnish peoples* (Estonians and Karelians), members of the *Baltic group* (Lithuanians and Letts), members of the *Iberian-Caucasian group* (Georgians, Kabardins, Circassians, Chechens, Avars and so on) and very many others.

² *Gubernias* were the main territorial-administrative units in tsarist Russia. In size they were very approximately equal to today's regions. *Gubernias* were divided into *uyezds* and *volosts*. The division into *gubernias* was retained in the early years after the Revolution—Ed.

³ Now Leningrad—Ed.

⁴ Now Kirov—Ed.

leys of the North Caucasus have long been inhabited by scores of mountain peoples—*Chechens*, *Circassians*, *Ossetians*, *Kabardins* and many others.

In the South-East, where vast sand deserts and scrublands alternate with huge snow-capped mountain ranges and oases rich in flora and fauna, the lands of Central Asia and Kazakhstan stretch for thousands of kilometres. To the East these are bounded by China and to the South by Iran and Afghanistan. There live *Kazakhs*, many of whom led a nomadic life before 1917 and in the early years of the Revolution, *Kirghizes*, *Uzbeks*, *Tajiks*, *Turkmen*, *Karalpak*s and others.

Such is the general ethnographic composition of a country which is unique in its diversity and which may serve as a model of a kind, reflecting the diversity of the world's population. This was noted by, among others, the renowned British historian and sociologist Arnold Toynbee, who wrote to his Soviet colleague I. Konrad that the Soviet Union had so many peoples speaking so many languages and inheriting such widely different cultures that it was a whole world in miniature.

But from looking at the political and administrative map of old Russia no one could gather that it was a multi-national state.

The whole country was divided into eight areas ruled by general-governors¹ (such as the Kiev, Irkutsk, Steppe and Turkestan General-Governorships), one Vice-Gerency in the Caucasus, many *gubernias* and several regions. Territories where very different peoples lived were split up among different *gubernias* and other administrative units. The Volga Tatars, for instance, lived in the Kazan, Ufa, Samara, Vyatka and Simbirsk *gubernias*. Lands inhabited by Kazakhs formed parts of the Steppe and Turkestan General-Governorships, the Turgai region, the Ural region and the Astrakhan *gubernia*. For tsarism there were no such entities as the Ukraine and the Ukrainians—maps showed the Kiev General-Governorship and the Yekaterinoslav, Poltava, Kharkov,

¹ General-Governorship, Vice-Gerency—the highest administrative-territorial units of tsarist Russia, which included, as a rule, several *gubernias* (see p. 11) These administrative units were set up in order to increase the degree of centralization of government. The General-Governor, as well as the Vice-Gerent, had more powers than the Governor, for he was at the same time the commander of the troops stationed on the territory within his jurisdiction.

Kherson and other *gubernias*. Other territories were similarly broken up. Thus the peoples living in old Russia had nothing resembling independent statehood or even autonomy.

The map of pre-revolutionary Russia strikingly shows how the authorities disregarded the natural right of every people to independence.

The non-Russians, who comprised half the population of Russia, were treated by tsarist officials as "aliens" and second-rate citizens. The national regions were, as a rule, economically backward and the outlying parts of the country were regarded solely as a source of raw materials. Sixty per cent of all industry was concentrated in the heart of the country and in the Urals. Although Transcaucasia and Central Asia produced cotton, almost all of it—more than 93 per cent—was processed in Central Russia. The only industry in Central Asia was a few railway workshops and small enterprises for the initial processing of agricultural raw materials, such as cotton ginneries, dairies and tanneries. The proletariat was only beginning to emerge there and workers' living and working conditions were even worse than those of their class brothers in Central Russia. Most enterprises in Central Asia had an average working day of 13 hours. In Turkestan the average wages in manufacturing industries in 1908 were 60 per cent below the average for the Russian Empire. In December 1909 the newspaper *Turkestansky Kuryer* (Turkestan Courier) described a cotton ginney as follows: "The ginning shop is incredibly dusty; there are only four hanging lamps with candle-ends in the whole of it and this is regarded as lighting. So the workers grope their way about the factory, with cotton wool in their mouths to filter the dust from the air they breathe... Not a week passes without an accident in which a worker is either crippled or killed."

The condition of people working on the land in national regions was no better. They were under the twin oppression of officials of the tsarist colonial apparatus and the local feudal lords and clan nobility who kept the rural poor in dire straits. A growing number of peasant households were left without land, livestock or farm tools. In 1917, in Turkestan 64.5 per cent of farmers were classed as poor, about 15 per cent of the peasants were landless and 35.5 per cent had no draught animals.

The living standards of most of the cattle-breeding

nomads of Central Asia, constituting a third of all engaged in agriculture, were also very low: more than 11 per cent had no livestock of their own, while the handful of feudal lords—no more than three per cent of the population—owned almost half the cattle.

The working people in the outlying national regions lacked virtually all political rights. All power belonged to tsarist officials, who ruled cleverly exploiting the traditional influence of local clan chiefs and feudal lords, of princes in the Caucasus and khans and beys in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Oppressors belonging to one's "own" nationality were just as bad as "foreigners".

Everywhere tsarism resorted to old Roman principle: "Divide and rule." Both in the outlying regions and in the centre it fostered mutual distrust and provoked inter-communal strife. In the Caucasus, for instance, there were frequent clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanians, between Georgians and Armenians. Strife and hostility often had a religious slant.

While the general level of literacy was very low—more than 66 per cent of all adults could neither read nor write—virtually the whole population in the outlying national areas was illiterate. No more than one or two per cent of the Kazakhs, for instance, were literate. In 1917 what is now Tajikistan had only a few religious primary schools, though the population exceeded one million. Secondary and higher schools simply did not exist. There was only one hospital. The towns had 19 doctors, the countryside—none. Nothing like a health service was to be found in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, the Volga region or the North Caucasus.

THE PATH TO LIBERATION

As may be seen, before the October Revolution almost all the peoples of Russia were far removed from the main road of social, economic and cultural progress. Suffering from twin oppression, national and social, they began to take an ever more active part in the struggle. The *strike* movement grew. *National* disturbances and uprisings broke out in many parts of Russia—in 1916 an uprising spread to many regions of Central Asia. These two streams of liberation struggle merged, because they both pursued one and the same aim—to

change the existing order of things. This could be achieved only by the revolutionary overthrow of the system based on the exploitation of man by man—in other words, by a *socialist revolution*. The prerequisites for such a radical change had ripened in Russia early in the 20th century. This may be seen by the fact that in the space of 12 years three popular revolutions took place involving tens of millions of people—the 1905-1907 Revolution, the revolution of February-March 1917 and the October Revolution of 1917.

The national liberation movement of the oppressed peoples was one of the most important factors in the whole advance of the revolutionary process. It is true that in the national liberation movement there were members of the propertied and even rich sections and groups pursuing narrowly national aims, but these tended to cause divisions in the movement as a whole. They formed nationalist parties and strove to increase their influence. But the internationalist unifying trend prevailed. All peoples suffered from oppression and all were beginning to understand that they should struggle against it in a united front. Gradually they were also beginning to see that their “own”, “national” oppressors were reaching an understanding with tsarism and the Russian capitalists and that this was an obstacle to social and national emancipation.

In turn, the Russian working class and its Party, the Communist Party, could exercise its leadership of the socialist revolution and overthrow the rule of tsarism and the bourgeoisie only in alliance with other social sections equally interested in radical change. These sections were the many-million-strong Russian peasantry and the oppressed nationalities. In such a multi-national country as Russia the revolution was bound to draw the non-Russian working people into its orbit. The founder and leader of the Communist Party, Vladimir Lenin, tirelessly stressed the need for an alliance of the revolutionary proletariat with the enslaved peoples. “...We must *link* the revolutionary struggle for socialism with a revolutionary programme on the nationalities question,”¹ he wrote in 1915.

What did Lenin mean by “a revolutionary programme on the nationalities question”?

Back in 1895-96, when the young revolutionary Vladimir

¹ V. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 21, p. 408.

Ulyanov (Lenin) was arrested by the tsarist authorities, he managed to smuggle out of prison sheets of paper covered with small handwriting: "Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social-Democratic Party". In this work, as in many other writings of his at that time, Lenin set out important views on the essence of nations and the laws of their rise and development. In later years he formulated the basic principles of the Communist Party on the nationalities question. These principles found expression in the Party Programme adopted in 1903 by the 2nd Congress of the Party—at that time it was called the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. The principles are: the right of all peoples living on the territory of the state to self-determination and the full equality of all citizens regardless of sex, religion, race or nationality.

This programme was put to the test in the Russian Revolution of 1905-1907, which united the workers of all the nations of Russia in the struggle against tsarism and constituted a veritable school of the internationalist solidarity of the proletariat of Russia.

The Communist Party invariably took a consistently internationalist line. It stressed that national oppression and national conflicts were based not on specific racial features of peoples and not on religious differences, but on the narrow class interests of exploiting classes and groups. From the very first days of its existence the Party became multi-national in composition and profoundly internationalist in its ideology, policy, organization and principles of work.

The Party set itself clear-cut tasks—to work for the genuine liberation of all peoples, for their complete equality, for them to be able to decide their own destinies. The Party worked persistently among the masses, uniting all the country's working people, irrespective of nationality, in common struggle against common adversaries. The finest sons and daughters of all the peoples of Russia marched in the Party's ranks under the red banner of revolution. Here are just a few names of Party leaders on the eve of the October Revolution: the Russians Mikhail Kalinin, Kliment Voroshilov and Anatoli Lunacharsky, the Ukrainian Grigori Petrovsky, the Pole Felix Dzerzhinsky, the Georgians Joseph Stalin and Grigori Ordzhonikidze, the Armenian Stepan Shaumyan, the Azerbaijanian Meshadi Azizbekov and Yakov Sverdlov, who was Jewish.

II

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND EMANCIPATION OF THE PEOPLES

FROM THE MARCH-FEBRUARY REVOLUTION TO THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

In February-March 1917 there was a bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia. Tsar Nicolas II, the last of the Romanov dynasty which had ruled Russia for 300 years, abdicated the throne which was crowned by a two-headed eagle. But that revolution did not resolve the problems facing the country.

A bourgeois Provisional Government came to power. It did not meet any of those demands of the masses of the working people which they had inscribed on their banners in accomplishing the revolution. The government continued the war against Germany,¹ although the people demanded the speediest possible conclusion of peace. It refused to hand the landowners' land over to the peasants who were in need of land, it failed to satisfy the pressing demands of the workers and to take effective measures to solve the nationalities question.

Millions of non-Russian working people remained shorn of rights. The Provisional Government was in fact continuing the old policy, leaving the whole tsarist apparatus of oppression intact.

In April 1917 the former Governor-General of Turkestan,

¹ The First World War of 1914-1918 was not supported by the masses of the people in Russia. The war was unleashed by rival militarist groups of powers—the Entente and the Austrian-German bloc—*Ed.*

A. Kuropatkin, had a talk with A. Kerensky, the future Premier of the Provisional Government (he was then Minister of Justice). Kuropatkin had won no renown in the Far East in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, where he had commanded the Russian troops, but was full of boldness in dealing with the downtrodden peoples of Central Asia. "The principles of equality should not be applied in full," he said categorically. "The natives must not be given full equality." Making this entry in his diary, he added: "Kerensky agreed with my view." This episode strikingly sums up the stand of the Provisional Government. The masses of the people saw that with the overthrow of the autocracy nothing had in fact changed in their lives. Their determination to fight for freedom and equality grew stronger from day to day, as the following facts show.

The Council of Latvian Riflemen,¹ elected in May 1917 and representing 48,000 soldiers, declared that "the riflemen have told the 'national guardians' to go to hell, have openly sided with the revolution and taken their place in the front ranks of the revolutionary proletariat".

Tashkent, May 1, 1917. The city's working people are celebrating May Day. Work has stopped throughout the city, factories are closed and the trams have stopped running. Russian workers have gone out into the streets to demonstrate. But they are not alone. They are met by marchers coming out from the old part of the city where Uzbeks live. The two columns merge, waving red flags, singing songs and holding meetings with banners calling for international working people's unity. The meetings are addressed by Russians, Uzbeks and people of other nationalities. May Day is being celebrated in other cities of Turkestan too.

In the Kazakh village of Merke in the Auliye-Ata uyezd a revolutionary meeting is held. Here is a contemporary newspaper account of it:

"...A procession of Muslims appeared. Red banners headed it... The Russian population went to greet them. Freedom songs and cheers were heard from both sides and then common demands were proclaimed."

¹ The Latvian Riflemen were soldiers of the Russian army, who were Letts by nationality. After the February Revolution Latvian bourgeois leaders tried to influence them to make them break away from the general revolutionary movement.

In May a wave of strikes began at enterprises in Tashkent, Kokand, Namangan, Samarkand and Kattakurgan, where Uzbeks, Tajiks, Russians and Kirghizes demanded an eight-hour working day and better working conditions.

As a rule, natives of Kazakhstan and Central Asia were not called up for military service. But when war broke out in 1914 many Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kirghizes and Tajiks were mobilized for work behind the front. After the February Revolution they started returning home and addressing meetings in their home towns and villages, explaining why the struggle had to go on. At a large meeting in Namangan, for instance, these workers made the call: "Stop heeding the beys, mullahs and capitalists! We must unite in a Soviet!"

All the streams of the popular movement merged in one—the protest against the murderous and gruelling war that the tsar had begun, the struggle of the poor peasants for land and the national liberation movement of the peoples.

The vitally important problem on whose solution the future of Russia hinged was that of settling inter-communal relations in a multi-national country or, more specifically, of working out a policy which would bring genuine equality of the peoples and give them real autonomy.

Such matters were among the items on the agenda at a conference of the Bolshevik Party (Communists) in April 1917. Thorough discussion of them was necessary because some Party members underestimated the importance and complexity of the nationalities question and thought it was "time to forget state and national frontiers" on the grounds that frontiers disunited revolutionary forces instead of uniting them. Lenin explained the untenability of this attitude. Like most of the delegates to the April Conference, which determined the strategy and tactics of the Party in the imminent socialist revolution, he pressed for the only correct way of solving the question. The resolution the conference adopted pointed out that "...the right of all the nations forming part of Russia freely to secede and form independent states must be recognized...", for only this ensured "...complete solidarity among the workers of the various nations" and helped "...to bring the nations closer together on truly democratic lines".¹ The famous slogan itself, "*Working Men of All Countries, Unite!*", does not in the least mean one must overlook the

¹ V. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 302.

interests of each of the contingents of the working class. On the contrary, it signifies the striving of the working people of *all* nationalities to make *their own* contribution to the common cause.

THE VICTORY OF THE GREAT OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

Thus, a countrywide crisis had ripened in Russia by the autumn of 1917. The workers' strike movement assumed an unprecedented scale. Among the major strikes—the general strike of railwaymen, the strike of 100,000 workers in the Urals and of 300,000 textile workers in the Ivanovo-Kineshma region—were mass actions that rallied workers of different nationalities, such as the oil workers' strike in Baku, in which Russians, Azerbaijanians, Armenians and workers from Daghestan acted together, and the strike of Russian and Ukrainian coalminers in the Donets coal basin.

The peasant movement grew into veritable uprisings everywhere. In the *gubernias* of Central Russia, the Ukraine and Byelorussia, where landed estates were particularly widespread and therefore the land hunger of the peasant masses was felt especially keenly, peasants seized landlord estates and clashed with government troops.

All these were significant milestones along the road to the socialist revolution.

Heading the revolutionary struggle, the Bolsheviks conducted tireless work among the masses, explaining the situation in the country and the essence of what was happening. Raymond Robins, a prominent American public figure, who was in Russia during the Revolution, said on his return home that Bolshevik propaganda dovetailed in with the aspirations of the masses like the breath of a man blowing in the same direction as an elemental hurricane.

The *October Socialist Revolution* triumphed on October 25 (November 7—New Style), 1917. This was announced to the whole world by the *2nd All-Russia Congress of Soviets*. Representing the overwhelming majority of the *gubernias* and cities of the country, its delegates included envoys from the

major national regions—the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic area, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Kazakhstan and the national areas of the Volga region. Voicing their will, the delegates from the Soviets of Kiev (the Ukraine) and Minsk (Byelorussia), Revel¹ (Estonia) and Dvinsk² (Latvia), Baku (Azerbaijan) and Tiflis³ (Georgia), Tashkent (Turkestan) and Kazan (Tataria), Izhevsk (Udmurtia) and Saransk (Mordovia), along with delegates from Petrograd, Moscow, the Urals and Siberia in the white-columned assembly hall of the Smolny Institute proclaimed the dawn of a new era in the history of Russia.

At 8.40 p.m. on October 26 (November 8) the delegates of the 2nd Congress again filled the hall of the Smolny Institute. "...A thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the presidium, with Lenin—great Lenin—among them," American journalist John Reed wrote in his famous book *Ten Days That Shook the World*. "...Unimpressive.... loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been. A strange popular leader—a leader purely by virtue of intellect; ...uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncrasies—but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analyzing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity."⁴

Lenin read out the *Decree on Peace*, which called on all the warring nations and their governments to start immediate negotiations for a just and democratic peace without annexations and indemnities. "...The government conceives the annexation or seizure of foreign lands to mean every incorporation of a small or weak nation into a large or powerful state without the precisely, clearly and voluntarily expressed consent and wish of that nation, irrespective of the time when such forcible incorporation took place, irrespective also of the degree of development or backwardness of the nation forcibly annexed to the given state, or forcibly retained within its borders, and irrespective, finally, of whether this nation is in Europe or in distant, overseas countries."⁵

¹ Now Tallinn—Ed.

² Now Daugavpils—Ed.

³ Now Tbilisi—Ed.

⁴ John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, International Publishers, New York, 1979, p. 125.

⁵ V. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol 26, p. 250.

As may be seen, in the very first days following the victory of the Revolution the Bolsheviks acted fully in keeping with their views and principles, with their nationalities programme, a programme which combined profundity of theoretical thought with the concreteness of the practical experience of work among the masses of working people in multi-national Russia for many years before the Revolution. The implementation of this programme began in difficult conditions, when it was still necessary to give legal force to the right of nations to independent existence in their own state, when one had to abolish all the national privileges and restrictions that existed in old Russia and to unite the working people of the whole country in order to build up the Soviet state together.

The revolutionary storm of October broke the fetters of age-old national oppression. Following the *Decree on Peace* and the *Decree on Land*, which abolished private ownership of land and turned it over to those who tilled it—the peasants, the stirring words of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia* resounded. It was signed on November 2 (15), 1917, by Vladimir Lenin who headed the Council of People's Commissars, the first Soviet government. The liberation and emancipation of the peoples of Russia, Declaration stated, "should be conducted resolutely and irrevocably". Four brief points in the Declaration summed up the programme of the Soviet government on the nationalities question:

"(1) The equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia;

"(2) The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination up to and including secession and the formation of independent states;

"(3) The abolition of all national and religious privileges;

"(4) The free development of the national minorities and ethnic groups inhabiting the territory of Russia."

There were no longer oppressor and oppressed nations in Russia: all its peoples were ensured the possibility of becoming the conscious makers of history.

Reporting to the *3rd All-Russia Congress of Soviets* in Petrograd in January 1918 on what the Soviet government had done in the first two and a half months, Lenin said that

the new government relied on the wholehearted and devoted support of the working people of the whole vast country. He spoke about what the new-born state of workers and peasants had done, about the tasks it was tackling and the principles determining its work, including its work in the sphere of building the national-state structure too. The draft document was read out which the Congress adopted on the report of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars—the historic *Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People*. This put the seal of law on the establishment of the *Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic*: “The Soviet Russian Republic is established on the basis of the free union of free nations as a federation of Soviet national republics.

“Each line of this Declaration,” said the Congress resolution, “has been dictated by the working classes themselves, and all politically conscious workers, peasants and soldiers will fight to the last drop of blood for the demands set out in this programme of the Soviets.”

Returning to the rostrum, Lenin declared: “The new system of the socialist Soviet Republic, as a federation of free republics of the different nations inhabiting Russia, has been finally accepted in this country in the sphere of domestic politics. It is now clear to all, and even to our enemies, I dare say, that the new system, the Soviet power, is not an invention or a Party, trick, but it is the result of the development of life itself.”¹

The Congress approved the nationalities policy of the Council of People's Commissars and adopted a decision “*On the Federal Institutions of the Russian Republic*” containing a detailed description of the features of the *Soviet Federation*. The decision announced that the supreme organ of power in the federation was the All-Russia Congress of Soviets and, in the periods between congresses, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. Taking note of the fact that the process of forming national Soviet republics was still continuing, the Congress declared: “The way in which Soviet republics and separate regions differing in their ways of life and national composition shall participate in the federal government, as also the demarcation of the spheres of activities of the federal and regional institutions of the Russian Republic, will im-

¹ V. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 479.

mediately upon the formation of regional Soviet republics be determined by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the executive committees of these republics."

Along with Russian workers and peasants the working people of all the other nationalities began to establish their own bodies of state administration, the *Soviets* (councils). This form of organization of state power was close and comprehensible to them because of its democratic, mass and public character.

Before the Revolution the working population of Russia was almost totally illiterate and this seriously hampered the advance of the country as a whole and of each nation in particular. This obstacle had to be removed as quickly as possible. A decree of the Council of People's Commissars adopted on December 26, 1919, stated: "The whole population of the republic between the ages of 8 and 50 who cannot read or write shall learn the alphabet in their native language or the Russian language as they prefer." An All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for the Abolition of Illiteracy was set up. All the country's cultural resources were drawn into this work.

New schools were opened in towns and the countryside; literacy courses and schools were organized for adults. Those attending them had their working day reduced by two hours with no loss of pay. Everywhere one could see striking posters proclaiming: "Down with illiteracy!", "Literacy is the sword to beat the forces of evil!" In the first three years of Soviet rule about seven million adults learned to read and write.

Special efforts were made to organize an educational system in the national regions. In particular, philologists began to devise alphabets for peoples which did not have one. One of the difficulties was that up to the time of the Revolution native teachers were virtually non-existent. Special schools and short courses were organized to train teachers of all nationalities.

A special state body, the *People's Commissariat for the Affairs of Nationalities*, was established in the early days of the Revolution to guide and coordinate state activities to draw the formerly oppressed peoples into participation in the common effort to build a new life. The commissariat was headed by Joseph Stalin, a leading Party figure who even before the Revolution had become known for his writings on

the nationalities question. The commissariat had departments, each of which was responsible for work in particular national regions. The *gubernia* and *uyezd* Soviets also had special departments dealing with the affairs of national minorities.

III

THE FIRST SOVIET NATIONAL REPUBLICS

Having won victory in the Revolution and with it won the right to their own national statehood, the peoples of Russia set about exercising this right.

NEW NAMES ON THE MAP

In December 1917, after Soviet rule was established in the Ukraine, the *Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic* was founded.

This took place at the 1st All-Ukraine Congress of Soviets on December 12 (25). In the first Soviet government of the Ukraine were such prominent revolutionaries as Nikolai Skrypnik, a veteran Party member, an engineer by profession, Vladimir Zatonski, a former lecturer of the Kiev Polytechnical Institute and Fyodor Sergeyev (Artyom), a well-known professional revolutionary who in 1910 escaped from life exile in Siberia to Australia via Korea and China and returned home in 1917.

A resolution "*On the Self-Determination of the Ukraine*" stressed that in its activities the Ukrainian Republic would in every way contribute to the consolidation of the closest ties with the Russian Federation.

Then the *Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic* was founded. A manifesto published on January 1, 1919, stated that all power in Byelorussia had passed into the hands of Soviets of worker, peasant, farm-hand and Red Army men deputies. The 1st Congress of Soviets of Byelorussia, held in February 1919,

adopted a resolution recognizing "the necessity of establishing close economic and political ties with its senior brother, the Russian Soviet Republic". Late 1918 and early 1919 saw the emergence of the *Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian Soviet Republics* on the Baltic coast.

A. Myasnikov, a leading professional revolutionary, became Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of Byelorussia. The Chairman of the first Soviet government of Lithuania was V. Mickevičius-Kapsukas, who had in his time given up the study of history and philosophy in the University of Berne in order to engage in revolutionary activities. The Council of People's Commissars of Latvia was headed by P. Stučka, a well-known lawyer active in the revolutionary movement in Latvia. W.Kingissepp, an outstanding Bolshevik Party leader, headed the Estonian Republic.

After a long-drawn-out struggle against foreign intervention by German, Turkish, British and other forces and against the forces of counter-revolution within the country Soviet power won and independent Soviet Socialist Republics were established in Transcaucasia. On April 28, 1920, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of *Azerbaijan* headed by Nariman Narimanov, a well-known Azerbaijanian revolutionary, writer and enlightener, issued an appeal to the population stating: "All power in the country has passed into the hands of the working classes. A new, bright era of socialism is dawning for the workers and peasants of Azerbaijan."

On November 29, 1920, the *Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic* was proclaimed, and on February 25, 1921, Grigori (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze, a prominent leader of the Georgian and all-Russia revolutionary movement, wrote in a telegram to Lenin from the capital of Georgia: "The Red Banner of Soviet power is fluttering over Tiflis. Long live Soviet Georgia!" Thus new state-administrative units without precedent in history—national *Soviet Socialist Republics*—appeared on the map of the country.

AUTONOMOUS REPUBLICS AND AUTONOMOUS REGIONS

But in those years not all the peoples of Russia could establish their own independent states. As has been noted, the

various peoples of Russia were at different levels of development. Many of them were economically, culturally and politically extremely backward. In addition, some of them were numerically small.

The task was to find forms of national self-determination corresponding to their overall level, to create a flexible system of national-state structure conforming to the vital interests and real possibilities of their peoples. That is why, alongside independent national republics, Autonomous Republics and Autonomous Regions emerged which became part of the Russian Republic, which was accordingly called the *Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic*.

The first such republic, *Turkestan* (Central Asia), was formed in the spring of 1918 within the confines of the former Turkestan Governor-Generalship (the native population consisted of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kirghizes and Turkmen and a considerable number of Russians). The second was the *Bashkir* Republic, lying between the Volga and the Urals. It was formed in March 1919. Following it two further Autonomous Republics came into being—the *Tatar* Republic in the middle reaches of the Volga with its capital in Kazan and the *Daghestan* Republic in the North Caucasus.

In 1920 the *Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic* was established in a vast territory of 2,700,000 square kilometres, extending from the Caspian Sea and the Ural River to Siberia, the Altai and the border with China.

The formation of national autonomies was a complicated and fairly lengthy process. In many areas there was a mixed population. In Central Asia, for instance, Uzbek villages alternated with Tajik and Turkmenian villages. In some places scattered tribes still existed. The complexity of the process of national self-determination may be seen in the case of the North Caucasus, where many numerically small peoples live. Initially along with Daghestan there was the *Gorskaya* (Mountain) Autonomous Republic. It embraced peoples differing in origin, language and cultural level and linked only by living close to one another and by their common way of life. For that reason they soon expressed the wish to form their own autonomies. First the *Ossetians* and then the *Chechens* and *Ingushes* seceded from the *Gorskaya* Republic.

As a result, instead of one republic there appeared—and exist to this day—five national Autonomous Republics—the *North Ossetian*, *Kabardin-Balkar*, *Chechen-Ingush*, *Karachai-Circassian* and *Adygei* republics. The Soviet government supported the national aspirations of each people, seeing to it that their interests were not infringed and that no one people obtained any privileges and rights at the expense of another.

A similar process was under way in other parts of the country.

In the Volga region the *Chuvash*, *Udmurt*, *Mordovian*, *Mari* and *Kalmyk* Autonomous Regions emerged. The *Karelian* Labour Commune was founded in the North-West, near the border with Finland. The Autonomous Region of the *Komi* people was formed in the forests of the North of the European part of the Russian Federation and the *Buryat* Autonomous Region was established near Lake Baikal in Siberia.

In the 1920s and 1930s, as their economies and culture developed, many *Autonomous Regions* were transformed into *Autonomous Republics*.

In 1921 the *Yakut* Autonomous Republic was established on a vast territory of more than three million square kilometres in North-Eastern Siberia, where mighty rivers slowly flow into the Arctic Ocean.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLICS OF BOKHARA AND KHORESM

Some explanation is needed of the situation that had arisen in Central Asia. Before the Revolution, alongside territories forming integral parts of the Russian Empire, there existed two vassal states which were Russian protectorates—the *Bokhara Emirate* and the *Khiva Khanate*. They were typical medieval despotic states where time seemed to have come to a stop.

In the Bokhara Emirate more than 85 per cent and in the Khiva Khanate more than 95 per cent of the cultivated land belonged to secular and religious feudal lords and senior officials. The peasants surrendered a considerable portion of

their harvest to the Emir or the Khan as tithes and were burdened with corvée and other duties. In Bokhara, for instance, more than 50 duties and taxes of various kinds were imposed on the peasants.

The bureaucratic apparatus in these states did not receive any regular salaries: from the omnipotent rulers of regions (*khakims* and *beks*) to the lowest scribe (*mirzo*) all the officials lived off the backs of the working population. Under such a system there were practically no limits to violence, arbitrary rule, extortion and bribery. This barbarous system rested on the absolute, terrifying and ruthless power of the Emir and the Khan.

For the slightest offence, not to mention disobedience, people were subjected to cruel public executions such as being thrown down from high minarets onto stone slabs or being hung on hooks. Thousands of people languished in underground prison cells swarming with snakes and scorpions.

Bokhara and Khiva were multi-national states: the power of the Emir and the Khan extended to Uzbeks, Tajiks, Karakalpaks and Kazakhs and no one people constituted a majority.

The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia did not immediately shake the power of the Bokhara and Khiva rulers. But there was mounting discontent among the population, who gradually learned what was happening in neighbouring Soviet Russia, and people's revolutions took place in Khiva in the spring of 1920 and in Bokhara in the autumn of that year. The Khan and the Emir were dethroned. The Emir of Bokhara fled to Afghanistan together with all his wealth. The caravan of 300 camels laden with the Emir's harem and trunks full of gold, silver and jewels was several kilometres long.

The Khiva Khanate was replaced by the *Khoresm People's Soviet Republic* and the Bokhara Emirate by the *Bokhara People's Soviet Republic*. Important democratic transformations were carried out in both republics. The properties of the former Emir and Khan were turned over to the people. The peasants were freed from feudal duties. A land reform was launched under which the peasants received the land that had belonged to rich feudal lords. The elimination of illiteracy began. In this world, where everything seemed to have stopped forever, time resumed its course.

As we can see, it was a complex and many-staged process. It continued in later years: ever new autonomous formations appeared, the borders of national regions were determined, Autonomous Regions were transformed into Autonomous Republics and Autonomous Republics into Union Republics. But the main contours of the Soviet national-state structure had already emerged in the first five years following the Revolution.

IV

THE STRUGGLING AGAINST A COMMON ENEMY

CIVIL WAR AND FOREIGN INTERVENTION

The October Revolution was truly a revolution of the whole people. Having taken power into their hands, the working people enthusiastically set about building a new life.

But considerable forces representing the old Russia still remained in the country—former landlords, bankers, the owners of factories and mills, tsarist officials and members of the nobility. They could not reconcile themselves to the loss of their political power, economic might and social privileges. After being overthrown, they did not lay down their arms but, on the contrary, continued to resist the rule of workers and peasants with increasing ferocity and eventually unleashed a Civil War. The first armed actions of the forces of counter-revolution near Petrograd, on the Don and in the South Urals were fairly easily suppressed. It was becoming clear that, having the support of the bulk of the population, Soviet power could certainly crush the resistance of the forces of counter-revolution in the country completely and comparatively quickly.

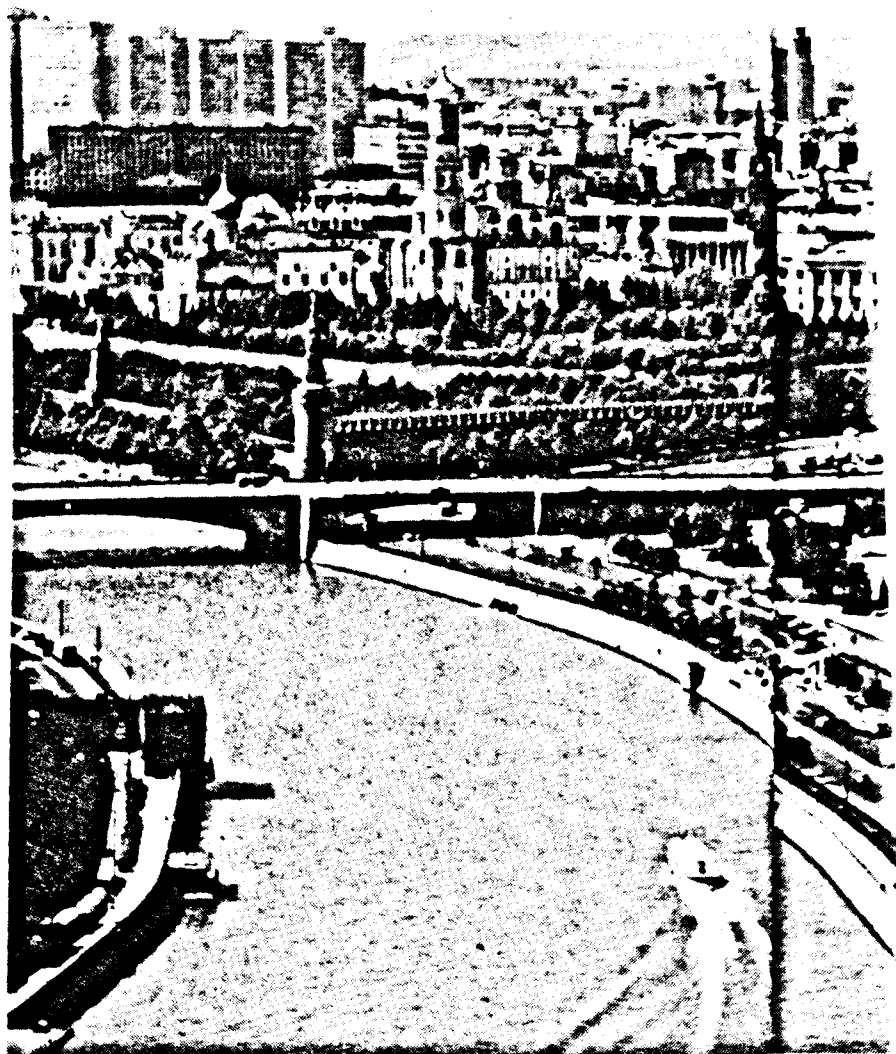
But the struggle became a long-drawn, hard and bloody one. This came about because external forces, namely, the major capitalist countries, came to the aid of the forces of counter-revolution in Russia and through open military intervention launched a large-scale war against Soviet Russia.

At first the country was invaded by German, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish troops. They forced upon it the rapacious Brest Peace Treaty¹, according to which they

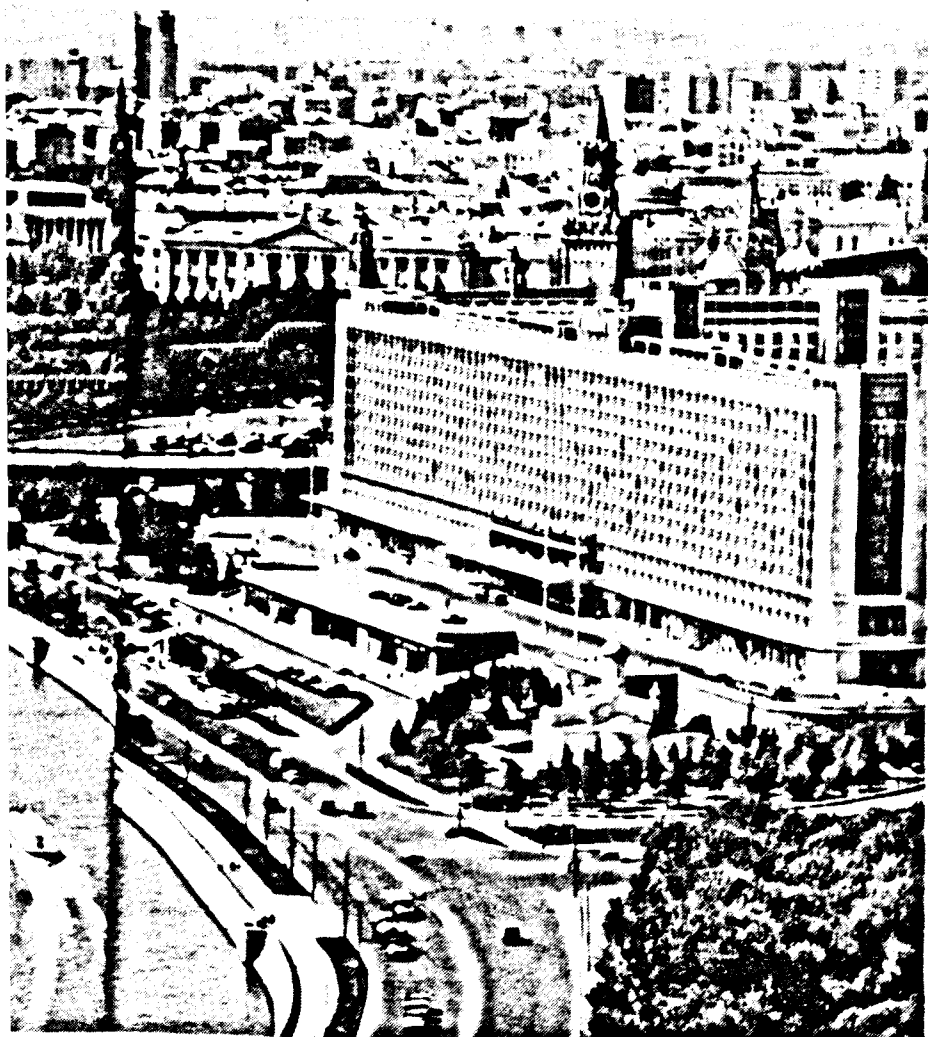
¹ On taking power the Bolsheviks in their very first decree, the Decree on Peace, declared that they regarded continuation of the imperialist war as a crime against humanity. From November 1917 to January 1918 the Soviet government sent the governments of the warring states, including the Entente countries, which had been allies of tsarist Russia in that war, a dozen

The formation of the USSR is, above all, associated with *Lenin*, who was the founder and leader of the multi-national Soviet state





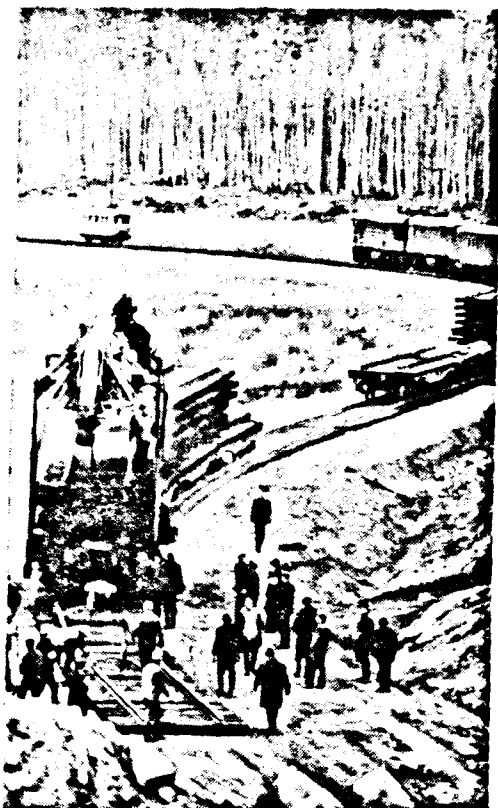
Moscow is the capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and also of the largest of the 15 Union republics, the Russian Federation (RSFSR)





A section of the Baikal-Amur Railway (BAM)

This new railway opens up hitherto unprecedented horizons for tapping the natural wealth of the Soviet Union's eastern regions. People from all over the country are helping to build this railway



At Urengoi drilling rigs

Urengoi's unique deposits of natural gas figure prominently in Soviet programmes for long-term co-operation with other countries. In return for deliveries of gas the Soviet Union is receiving large-diameter pipes and various equipment from West European countries for building the West Siberia-Western Europe gas pipeline

Nuclear Physics Institute of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences

Established a quarter of a century ago, the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences is now a major centre of world science. In this period Siberian scientists have made a weighty contribution to research into fundamental theoretical problems and to carrying out economic tasks on an ever larger scale



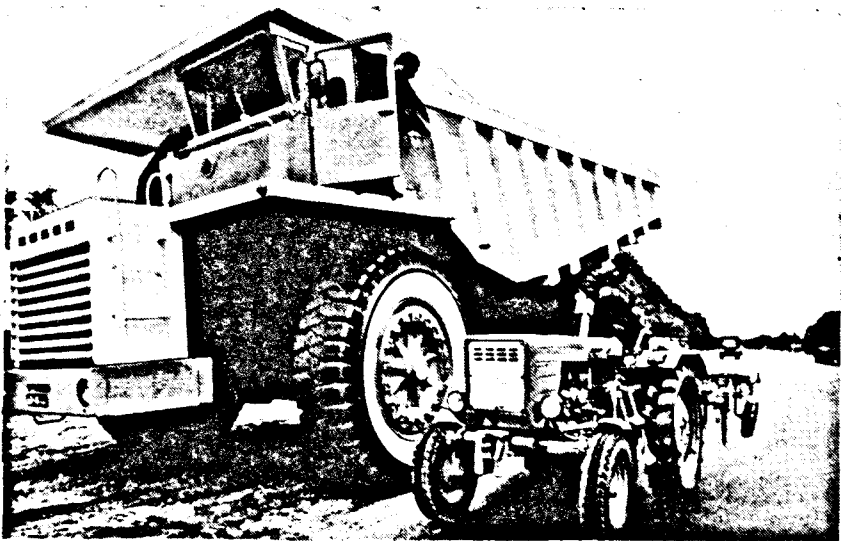
A heavy-duty BelAZ lorry

The first ten lorries were assembled in the Soviet Union in 1924. The USSR now turns out 2,160,000 motor vehicles a year, including those manufactured by the motor industry in Byelorussia. BelAZ trucks produced by the Byelorussian Association for the Manufacture of Heavy-Duty Lorries are used at construction sites and enterprises of the coal, iron-and-steel and non-ferrous metal industries. They are also exported to more than 50 countries

Mukachevo substation of the "Mir" power grid in the Ukraine

The "Mir" integrated power grid links the USSR with other CMEA member-countries





Grape picking in Moldavia

Nearly a third of the Soviet Union's grapes are grown in the republic. Moldavian grapes go to Moscow, Leningrad, the Baltic region and Siberia. Part of the harvest goes to wine-making plants. Moldavian wines and cognacs have a world-wide reputation

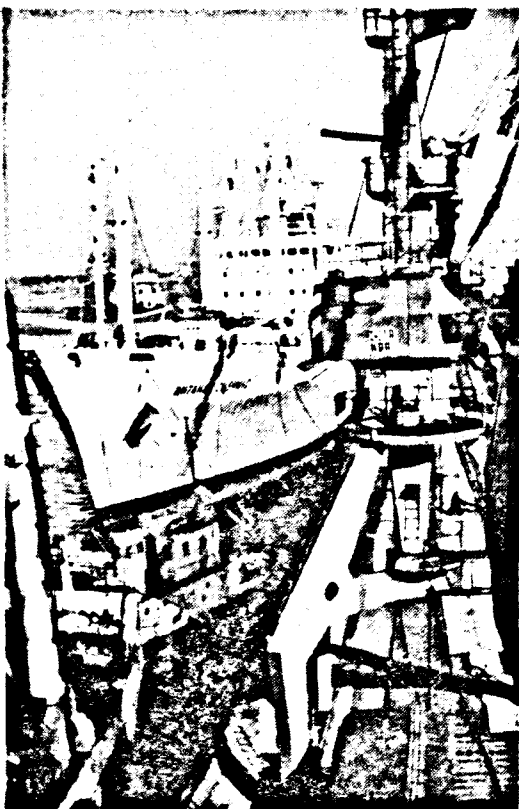
The reading hall in the Rare Books Department at Vilnius State University

Twelve schools of higher learning in the Lithuanian SSR train specialists for nearly every sector of the national economy, science and culture. The republic now has more than 2,000 public libraries. Before 1940, for instance, a third of Lithuania's population over the age of 10 were half-literate or totally illiterate

Tallinn, capital of Estonia

Monuments of ancient architecture perfectly suit the skyline of present-day Tallinn with its inimitable local atmosphere





The port of Klaipeda

The Soviet republics on the Baltic coast are the western sea gates of the USSR. Through these ports Soviet goods are shipped to dozens of other countries

Yerevan Children's Art Gallery in Armenia

The Yerevan Children's Art Gallery has hundreds of young visitors every day. In their paintings the young artists depict the world around them, a world full of bright hues and human kindness

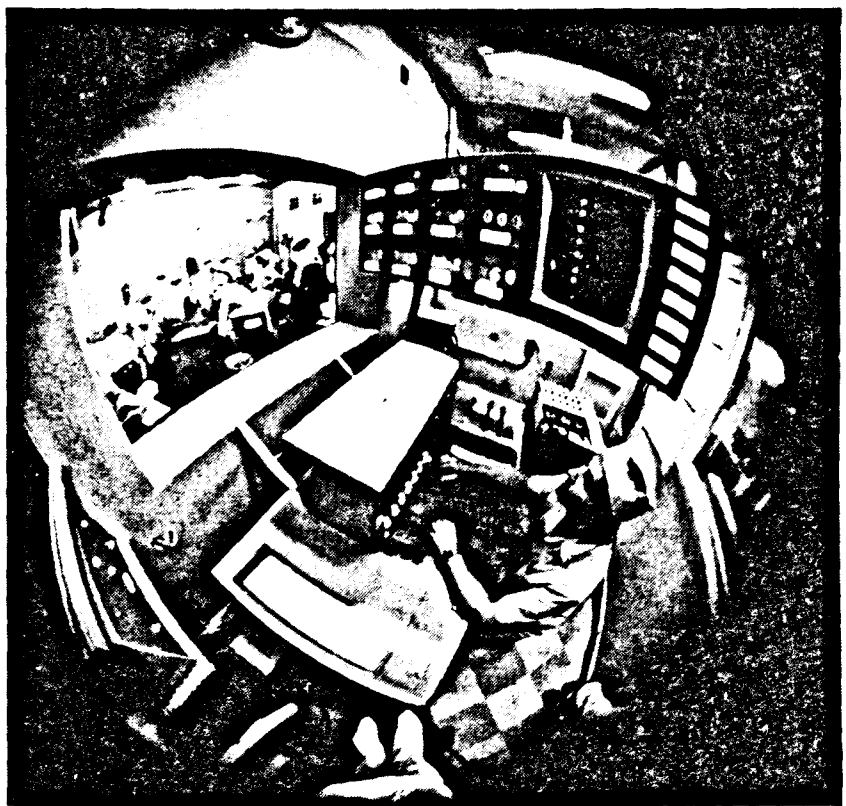
Reanimation centre in Baku, Azerbaijan

Today the republic has 20,000 doctors and life expectancy is now over seventy, compared with 27 only 50 years ago

Machine tea-picking

The republic of Georgia produces 95 per cent of Soviet tea. Tea is one of the most labour-consuming crops. It was here in Georgia that machines were used for the first time ever for picking tea leaves







Monument to Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna) in Dushambe, Tajikistan

The thousandth anniversary of the birth of this outstanding scholar of the early Middle Ages was recently celebrated

Participants in the International Tashkent Film Festival of Afro-Asian and Latin American Countries

At the Tashkent forum, where progressive films are reviewed, famous film-makers and young film-makers from the developing countries meet as equals in the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan

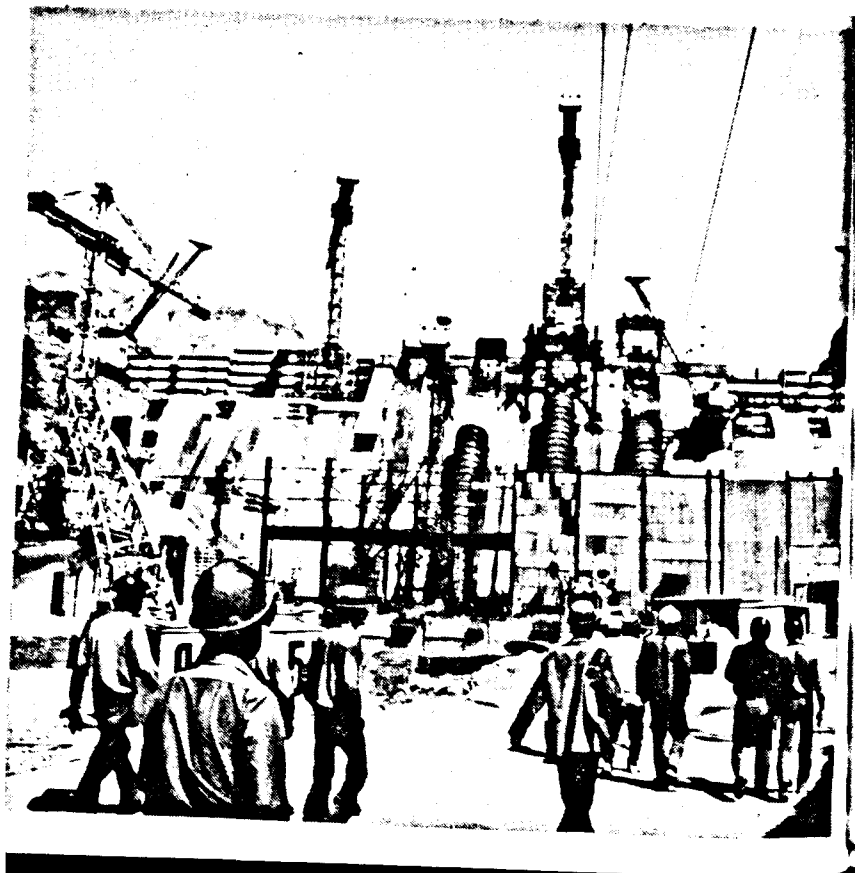


Grain harvesting in Kazakhstan

A thousand million poods of grain a year are grown here

Work on the Kurpsai Hydropower Station in Kirghizia

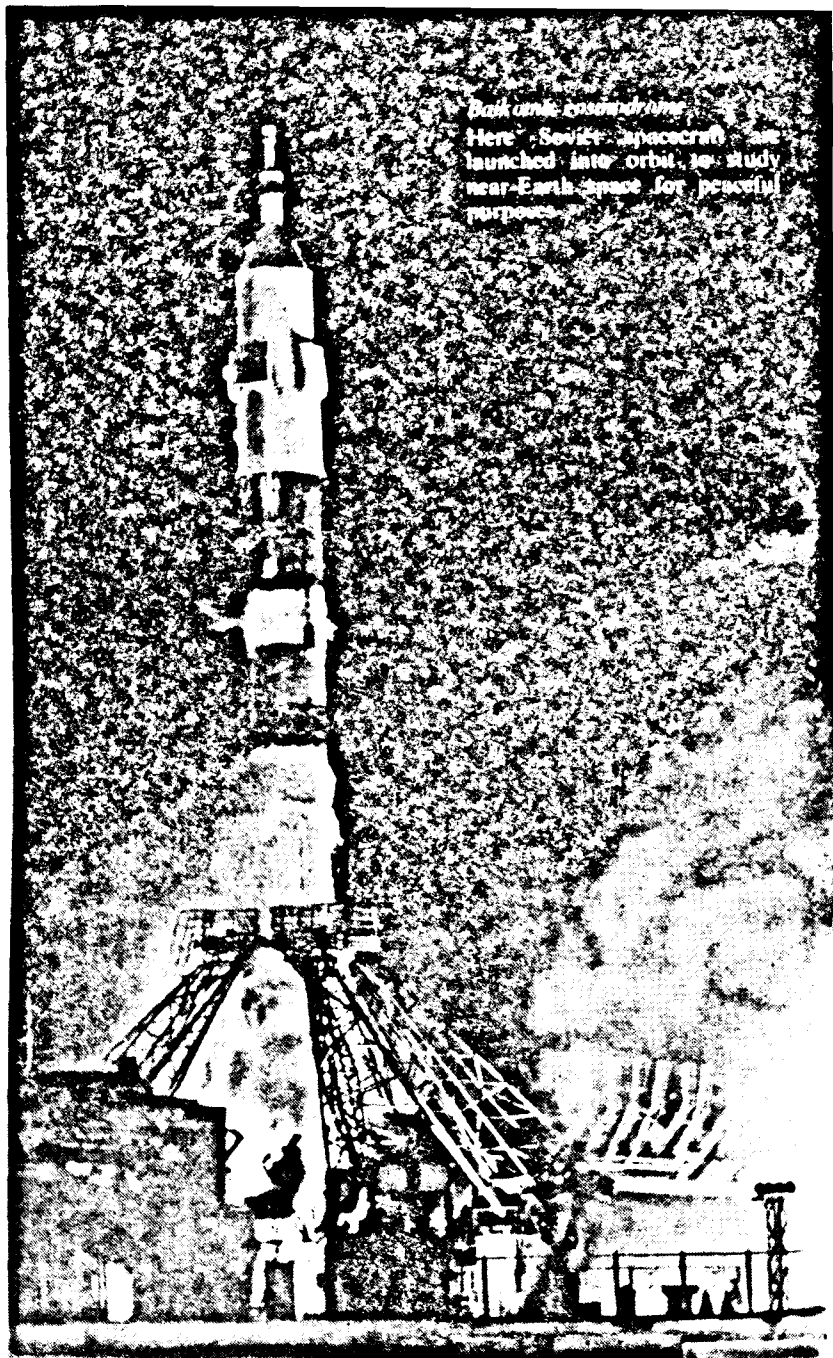
The USSR generates as much electricity in four hours as it did in the whole year of 1922, when the USSR was formed. When the Kurpsai hydropower station, one of a series on the Naryn, starts operation, the integrated power grid of Central Asia will have even more power at its disposal





Dark circle: cosmonauts' view

Here Soviet spacecraft are launched into orbit to study near-Earth space for peaceful purposes.



occupied vast territories in the West and South-West of the country, including the whole of the Baltic area, the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Shortly afterwards, violating the provisions of the Brest Peace Treaty, German forces moved into the Crimea and the Caucasus.

At the same time the Entente states began armed intervention against Soviet Russia. In disregard of all the standards of international law and of its own agreements and obligations, Romania occupied neighbouring Bessarabia (now Moldavia).

In the spring and summer of 1918, first British and then US troops landed in Murmansk and Archangel in the North of Russia, and simultaneously Japanese, British and US troops began to occupy the Far Eastern regions of the country, seizing the seaport of Vladivostok on April 5. In August 1918 British troops coming from Iran occupied the Transcaspian Region.

At first the leaders of the Entente powers explained the sending of troops to Russia by the need to "help" their former ally, to prevent the seizure of Russian territories by the German army, because at that time, in the spring and summer of 1918, the war of Britain, France and the US against Germany, Austro-Hungary and Turkey was still continuing. But the intervention continued after the First World War was over. The Compiègne Armistice (November 1918) ended the world war, but it did not end the intervention. On the contrary, it opened a new chapter in the chronicle of intervention: even more openly and on an even broader scale the Entente imperialists began the invasion of revolutionary Russia.

The real reason for the intervention was quite a different one: the leaders of the capitalist powers were striving to destroy the world's first worker-and-peasant state. One of the pillars of the Western world, Winston Churchill, who was then the British Secretary of War, frankly declared that the

proposals for concluding a universal and just peace, one without annexations and indemnities, but the response was negative. Since Kaiser Germany was continuing hostilities Soviet Russia was compelled to start separate negotiations with Germany. The negotiations began in Brest-Litovsk. The terms laid down by Germany envisaged the detachment of a considerable part of the territory of the country and the payment of large indemnities. In view of the difficult domestic and foreign political position of the young republic, the Soviet government signed the onerous peace treaty in March 1918. In November 1918, when a revolution broke out in Germany and Kaiser Wilhelm II was dethroned, the rapacious Brest Peace Treaty was annulled.

chief aim of intervention was to strangle Bolshevism in the cradle. Furthermore, the growth of the revolutionary movement all over the world could not help but gravely alarm ruling circles in the capitalist countries. Revolutionary Russia set a particularly dangerous example.

Another important fact was that the October Revolution had deprived Western capitalists of their factories and mills, concessions and capital investments in Russia, and they were keen to regain them.

So after the defeat of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Turkey in the First World War, far from diminishing, armed intervention against Soviet Russia was stepped up. An Anglo-French fleet of warships entered the Black Sea. British troops appeared in Transcaucasia—in Batumi, Baku and Tiflis. Soldiers wearing the uniforms of different armies of Europe—French and Greek, British and Serbian—marched through the streets of the southern Ukrainian cities of Odessa, Kherson and Nikolayev. Many languages could be heard everywhere. In early 1919 there were no fewer than 130,000 foreign soldiers in the South of Soviet Russia. At various times and on a varying scale 14 foreign powers took part in armed intervention against Soviet Russia. A tight blockade of the Soviet Republic was established. Not a single ship, even carrying food or medical aid, could reach the shores of Soviet Russia: it was virtually cut off from the rest of the world. The Entente powers sent huge quantities of arms to the armed forces of the Russian counter-revolution—supplies ranging from tanks to rifles, from guns and machine-guns to ammunition.

The linking up of the forces of international and domestic reaction presented a mortal danger to all the peoples of Russia: their independence and freedom were at stake, because the great powers had reached agreement on partitioning Russia and turning its territories into colonies, protectorates and zones of influence.

The Ukraine was the scene of heavy fighting. At first it was invaded by German troops. Then Ukrainian ports were seized by French landing troops. In the summer and autumn of 1919 the White Guard¹ army of General Denikin passed through

¹ The armed forces of the counter-revolution called themselves the "White Guard". White symbolized "law and order" as opposed to red, the colour of struggle against the old order, the traditional colour of revolution—*Ed.*

the Ukraine. In the spring of 1920 a considerable part of the Ukraine was occupied by troops of capitalist Poland and in the autumn several of its southern regions were seized by the White Guard army of former tsarist officer, General Wrangel. Byelorussia experienced the horrors of foreign invasion. At different times and for varying periods the interventionist and White Guard forces occupied areas in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, the Caucasus and the Volga region.

A particularly difficult situation arose in the Baltic republics. As has been said, in late 1918 and early 1919 the independent Soviet Republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were established there. But they came under the blows of foreign invaders and the internal forces of counter-revolution. Hostilities against the Baltic Soviet Republics were conducted by German troops—the corps of General Goltz, as well as Swedish and Finnish troops and Danish volunteers. The United States, Britain and France spent many millions of dollars on forming and equipping detachments of Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian counter-revolutionaries, who were actively supported from the sea by British warships. Under pressure from the interventionists and White Guards Soviet rule was overthrown in the Baltic Republics and power passed into the hands of the capitalists. Only twenty years later did they rejoin the family of Soviet Republics.

The struggle of the peoples of Soviet Russia against foreign intervention and the forces of internal counter-revolution was waged throughout the country, from the shores of the Baltic to the Pacific Coast and from the Arctic port of Murmansk to the Pamir Mountains.

The gruelling Civil War lasted several years. Only by the end of 1920 were the main forces of the enemy defeated, while in some regions hostilities went on—the Japanese invaders, for instance, were driven from Vladivostok only at the end of 1922.

The bid to strangle Bolshevism failed. Although it was at the cost of great losses and sacrifices, the newly-born land of the Soviets won complete victory.

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER SAFEGUARDING THE GAINS OF THE REVOLUTION

Among other things victory was won thanks to the close unity of all the peoples of the country in the struggle for a

common cause. In the course of the open military clash with the forces of the old world this unity grew in strength and acquired new meaning.

On June 1, 1919, representatives of the Soviet Republics of Russia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Byelorussia adopted a decision on establishing a military union and giving it legal force: "The Soviet Socialist Republics created by the working people on the territory of Russia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Byelorussia have repeatedly and for all to hear declared their readiness to enter into peaceful negotiations with a view to ending the war imposed on them." But the capitalist powers, the decision went on, had "ignored these peaceful proposals" and "are now exerting every effort to suppress Soviet power wherever it has been established by the revolutionary movement of workers and peasants... Rebuffing this attempt again to plunge into slavery tens of millions of Russian, Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Byelorussian workers and peasants demands of them the closest union of fighting forces, centralization and leadership in the hard fight to the end. The military alliance of all the above-mentioned Soviet Socialist Republics should be their first reply to the offensive of their common enemies..."

Fully adhering to the principle of recognizing the independence, freedom and self-determination of the masses of working people, the decision envisaged a close amalgamation of military command, economic councils¹, railway management and facilities, finance and the commissariats of labour.

The decision expressed the conviction of the peoples that it was necessary for them to pool their efforts and jointly to repel the pressure of the enemy.

This union, a voluntary one, dictated by the vital interests of the peoples and reinforced by the experience of hard struggle, was formed during the years of the Civil War. It was a single multi-national army that defended Soviet power. Russian proletarians—workers of Moscow and Petrograd, Ivanovo-Voznesensk and Tula, the Urals and Nizhni Novgorod—who formed the core of the Soviet armed forces,

¹ The Supreme Economic Council directed the major branches of the economy of the country. In the years of Civil War and foreign intervention, along with directing the economic councils of the Soviet Republics, it was also in charge of the production and distribution of raw materials and products—*Ed.*

fought on all fronts. They welded together the many-million-strong mass of the peasants of Russia who rallied under the banners of the Red Army. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian workers and peasants fought shoulder to shoulder with Russian Red Armymen. In the struggle to defend Soviet rule remarkable bravery was displayed by Latvian riflemen, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Bashkirs, Tatars and people of other nationalities. Addressing the Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs and Turkmen fighting on the Turkestan front in 1920, the outstanding army commander and statesman Mikhail Frunze said: "You have come together regardless of language, race or religion in a fraternal union of workers and poor peasants and you have saved the situation. You have earned the deepest gratitude of our socialist homeland and of the proletariat of the whole world."

Towards the end of the Civil War the Soviet Republics of Russia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia had voluntarily combined the operation of their armed forces, large-scale industry, finance, transport and communications. This unification was affirmed in relevant agreements. From now on delegates of all the Socialist Republics took part in the work of all-Russia congresses of Soviets and were elected to the supreme organ of power of the Russian Federation, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (ARCEC). Treaties reaffirmed the inviolability of the principles of the equality of peoples and the preservation of each republic's sovereignty.

In all the Soviet Republics overall political leadership was given by their Communist Parties, which together comprised the single Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)—RCP(B).

The Civil War years were thus an important stage in developing and strengthening the union of the peoples. The main point of this union was armed defence against the encroachments of the forces of counter-revolution at home and abroad. "... The task which now confronts us is to transfer our war-time experience to the sphere of peaceful construction," Lenin told the 7th All-Russia Congress of Soviets. "The main period of the civil wars we have been fighting lies behind us, and... ahead of us lies the main period of peaceful construction which means so much to all of us,

which we desire, which we must carry out and to which we shall dedicate all our energies and our whole lives. We can now say... that in the main, in the military and in the international sphere, we have been victorious. The path of peaceful construction opens up before us.”¹

¹ V. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 30, p. 225.

V

THE URGE TO UNION

THE FOUNDATIONS OF UNITY

The unity of the Soviet Republics that grew strong in the testing years rested on foundations differing in principle from those on which the bayonet-enforced unity of old Russia rested. The new unity born of the October Revolution was the unity of free and equal peoples based on the community of their social structures, political systems, aims and tasks.

As early as in 1918 Lenin had said: "We do not rule by dividing, as ancient Rome's harsh maxim required, but by uniting all the working people with the unbreakable bonds of living interests and a sense of class... This federation is invincible and will grow quite freely, without the help of lies or bayonets."¹

It was precisely in this way, without lies or bayonets, that the unity of liberated peoples was forged and steeled.

The peoples who had created national Soviet Republics and won the possibility of self-determination, up to and including secession as separate states, did not disperse. On the contrary, they consciously and voluntarily strove for unity, because they knew from experience that their enemies at home and abroad were ruthless in their desire to preserve their power, privileges and wealth and that when necessary they would join forces. In the struggle for social emancipation it became crystal clear to the working people of the whole country that separation spelt death. To be free, they had to unite.

Towards the end of the Civil War there were several independent Soviet Republics on the territory of old Russia. The biggest of them, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, embraced the regions in Central, Northern and

¹ V. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 480, 481.

North-Western Russia, the Urals and Siberia mainly inhabited by Russians. It included also Kazakhstan and the national autonomous formations in the Volga region, Central Asia and the North Caucasus. Russians constituted about 80 per cent of the population of the RSFSR. Being the first multi-national Soviet state, the Russian Federation was a prototype of the future USSR.

The Russian Federation extended over a vast territory of more than 20 million square kilometres and had a population of nearly 100 million.

The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic occupied the territory of about 500,000 square kilometres with the population exceeding 26 million of whom over 70 per cent were Ukrainians. Russians and people of many other nationalities also lived there.

The Byelorussian SSR was at that time small in territory and population (1,500,000). Later, in 1924, the borders of Byelorussia were extended to include several districts in the Gomel and Vitebsk *gubernias* with a predominantly Byelorussian population.

In 1922 the three Transcaucasian Soviet Republics, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, with a total population of six million, joined to form the *Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic*. The Georgian SSR included the Abkhassian and Adzhar Autonomous Republics and the South Ossetian Autonomous Region.

In Central Asia the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic bordered on the Bokhara and Khoresm People's Soviet Republics with a population of three to four million people. As already explained, these two republics were formed in place of the Bokhara Emirate and Khiva Khanate.

By the time the Civil War ended and peaceful construction began all the Soviet Republics were linked by a set of treaties. But they did not yet constitute a single state. With the end of the Civil War it became more important than ever for these republics to unite. The country had been ravaged by war. The regions, where the White Guards and foreign intervention armies had been, presented a terrible picture of devastation—mines flooded, blast furnaces blown up, machinery damaged, bridges and railway stations destroyed and crops trampled flat. Some branches of industry, such as metallurgy and coal-mining, had been reduced to the 18th-century level. Restoration of the economy called for vast efforts. If each

people set about the task separately it would take them dozens of years to regain the prewar¹ level. Clearly, the task could be accomplished much faster if efforts were pooled.

But it was not enough merely to regain the prewar level, because that had been the level of a comparatively backward country. The task was to bring about an upswing in the economy, substantially to develop the leading branches of industry. Joint efforts were obviously needed.

The difficulties were increased by the fact that the various peoples of the country were at different levels of development. They all now had equal rights, but in fact inequality remained because many of them were extremely backward. Their backwardness had to be overcome in the shortest possible period. This could only be done with the help of more advanced peoples, the Russian people in the first place. Such assistance, fraternal and disinterested aid, was given. But this aid too could be most effectively given within the framework of a single state.

Although the fighting was over, the danger of fresh acts of aggression remained. So it was still necessary to join forces so as to withstand economic and diplomatic pressure and face the increasing military threats from abroad.

All these factors led to a broad movement of the peoples for establishing a single Soviet state. Life itself demanded an even closer union of the peoples; the existing treaty relations no longer matched the new tasks.

SEEKING THE FORM OF UNION

In the spring of 1922 on the initiative of the Ukraine discussion began of the question of on the basis of what principles and in what form the republics should unite. The Ukrainian proposal was supported by Byelorussia and Transcaucasia. In August the Central Committee of the RCP(B) set up a special commission to examine the matter. It included such leading Party members as Joseph Stalin, Valerian Kuibyshev and Grigori Ordzhonikidze and representatives of all the Soviet Republics.

The question of what form the union should take was far

¹ The last prewar year was 1913, in 1914 the First World War broke out—*Ed.*

from simple: a state of a type never before known to history was to be established. The form was not found at once. In particular, according to one draft the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia were to become parts of the RSFSR as Autonomous Republics. But in this particular instance the principle of autonomous formations was unacceptable: it would have infringed the rights of these republics and could have harmed relations between the nations. There were proposals of an opposite nature, that the republics be united on the basis of confederation. This would have meant there being no single citizenship, no single budget, no uniform diplomacy, and so on, and would have tended to disunite rather than unite the republics.

It took a man of genius like Lenin to surmount these two erroneous trends and find the only correct path. Lenin proposed creating a new form of statehood—a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics based on the full equality of all the republics constituting it.

On September 26, 1922, Lenin wrote to the members of the Politbureau: "...We recognize ourselves as equals of the Ukrainian SSR and others and join, on an equal footing with them, a new union, a new federation..."¹ On October 6 a plenary meeting of the RCP(B) Central Committee fully supported Lenin's proposal and adopted a resolution accordingly: "To regard as necessary the conclusion of a treaty of the republics and the RSFSR on their unification in a 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics', each of them to retain the right of free secession from the 'Union'."

The masses of working people in all the republics unanimously approved the idea of forming the USSR. In the autumn of 1922 meetings and congresses of local Soviets were held throughout the country. It was a kind of referendum in the course of which the working people spoke out in favour of establishing the USSR as speedily as possible.

Here are some typical comments and resolutions of the time.

"Only a close union of the Soviet Republics will make possible their rapid revival and successful construction of a great Soviet federation," said a resolution of the Yerevan (Armenia) *Uyez*d Congress of Soviets.

A Tiflis City Party conference passed a resolution stating:

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Complete Works*, Vol. 45, p. 211 (in Russian).

"This new fraternal union of equals, which has no precedent in the world, fully accords with the vital interests of the peoples of the land of the Soviets, whose political consolidation and economic development demand their joining together in a single powerful Union of Soviets."

The Baku (Azerbaijan) City Soviet expressed its confidence that a "mighty Union of Soviet Socialist Republics headed by supreme Union bodies will be established".

In December Congresses of the Soviets of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Transcaucasian Federation and the Russian Federation were held. Grigori Petrovsky, veteran Party member and well-known revolutionary, who became the President (Chairman of the Central Executive Committee) of the Ukraine, said in his opening speech at the All-Ukraine Congress of Soviets: "The Ukrainian people have expressed their will in favour of rallying the Soviet Socialist Republics into a single mighty union."

A session of the Central Executive Committee of the Ukraine resolved: "The five years' existence of the republics furnishes us with sufficient material for the firm and final establishment of relations leading to the real pooling of all our forces in all directions."

The Congress of Soviets of Byelorussia noted that the Soviet Union, "by uniting the forces of the workers and peasants of all the Soviet Republics on the basis of mutual equality and close political and economic relations and at the same time ensuring the independent national and cultural development of each of its members and providing the necessary guarantees for the display of their economic initiative, accords with the vital interests of Soviet Byelorussia."

Reporting to the First Congress of Soviets of Transcaucasia Grigori Ordzhonikidze said that the recently concluded *Uyezd* Congresses of Soviets of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan had "spoken out unanimously for the establishment of a Union of Soviet Republics which would fully ensure the cultural development of the peoples..., safeguard their language, literature and so on, and would at the same time strengthen the might of all the Soviet Republics by uniting separate independent republics into a common Union state".

On December 17, 1922, Mikhail Kalinin, Chairman of the Presidium of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, wrote in *Izvestia*: "Many are interested in the question of the

Soviet Republics joining together. This question has been raised by the republics allied with us. It was debated there and discussed at their Congresses of Soviets; the initiative is theirs. I think it will meet with a lively response in the RSFSR."

On December 23 a regular All-Russia Congress of Soviets met in Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre.

"We already see the rise of the new red banner of the Union of Soviet Republics," Kalinin said in his closing speech. "Comrades, I see this banner in the hands of Comrade Lenin."

The unanimous resolutions of the congresses gave legislative expression to the resolve of the peoples to establish a Union state. The congresses elected delegates to the First All-Union Congress of Soviets.

VI

DECEMBER 1922: THE USSR IS ESTABLISHED

THE FIRST CONGRESS OF SOVIETS OF THE USSR

On the morning of December 30, 1922, the stalls and many balconies of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow were filled with delegates to the Congress. From the transcript of the session and press reports one can recapture the businesslike and at the same time festive atmosphere of the work of the Congress. At 11.00 a.m. Pyotr Smidovich, one of the oldest delegates, a man with grey hair and a black moustache, who had taken an active part in establishing Soviet power in Moscow, declared the Congress open. In a brief opening address he spoke of the new stage of unification which, he said, was "the source of tremendous new forces of resistance and creation—incomprehensible and terrifying to the capitalist world, but joyously amazing and attractive to the workers of all countries".

After Smidovich proclaimed, "Long live the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics now constituted!" the stirring majestic melody of the "Internationale" resounded in the auditorium, drowning the applause.

Mikhail Kalnin was elected chairman of the Congress. A former peasant who had become a worker and professional revolutionary, in the spring of 1919 he had become President of the RSFSR—Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the highest organ of power of the Russian Federation. This man of short stature with a wedge-shaped beard and wearing steel-rimmed spectacles was well known to the working people of the country. He often visited remote towns and villages, talking with workers and peasants there.

Lenin, prevented by grave illness from directly participating in the work of the Congress, was elected its honorary chairman.

The delegates sent a message to him expressing their profound love for the inspirer and founder of the union of the peoples.

Their message said: "As it starts its proceedings, the First Congress of Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Red Armymen's deputies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics sends ardent greetings to the honorary chairman of the First Congress of Soviets of the USSR and the leader of the world proletariat, Comrade Vladimir Ilyich Lenin."

The report on the *Declaration and Treaty* on the formation of the USSR was delivered by Joseph Stalin. He gave a brief account of the path the country had traversed in the first five years following the Revolution and he read out the documents submitted to the Congress.

The first was the Treaty on the formation of the USSR. It set out the terms of reference of the Union state, established its supreme organs and affirmed the rights of the republics which henceforth comprised a single Union state.

The Declaration dealt with the factors and circumstances that brought about the rallying of all the peoples of the country and above all made necessary joint restoration of the national economy and joint defence in the event of fresh attacks by imperialist powers.

"...The very composition of Soviet power, international in its class nature, impels the masses of working people onto the road of union in one socialist family.

"All these circumstances imperatively demand the unification of the Soviet Republics in one Union state capable of ensuring external security, internal economic prosperity and the freedom of the national development of the peoples."

Speaking on behalf of the working peoples of other countries, well-known Bulgarian revolutionary Vasil Kolarov called for strengthening the might of the Soviet land, the bulwark and hope of the workers and peasants of the whole world. "Comrades, plough your field deeply, make your Soviet building a solid one, place your Union on granite foundations..."

On the proposal of Mikhail Frunze, well-known revolutionary and Civil War army commander, who in 1922 became Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukraine, the Declaration and Treaty were put to the vote. Again applause drowned the chairman's words: the documents were adopted unanimously. A single

multi-national state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, had been established.

Veteran Soviet author Valentin Katayev recalls:

"At that time there was still no radio relay network in Moscow. But as soon as the words of the historic Declaration resounded in the theatre, news of the proclamation of the Soviet Union spread like lightning throughout the capital. Throngs of Muscovites gathered in squares and boulevards and at crossroads, surrounding Congress delegates. Spontaneous meetings were held in shops and factory yards. People demonstrated in the streets, singing and carrying red banners. Bands were playing loudly. The proud new words—'the Soviet Union'—were on everybody's lips.

"Citizens of the newly proclaimed Soviet Union raised red banners bearing the four letters: 'USSR'. These letters fluttered proudly above the crowds."

WHAT IT SIGNIFIED

It would be difficult to exaggerate the historic international significance of the formation of the USSR.

The Socialist Revolution, the socialist system had brought about real unity of the peoples of the country. Never before had there ever been such unity and such a state anywhere, nor could there have been. The point is that any system based on exploitation, whether it be the slave-owning, feudal or capitalist system, does not unite peoples. We are all familiar with the legend about the building of the tower of Babel. People building a giant tower suddenly began to speak different languages, could no longer understand each other and left the tower unfinished. The legend enshrined, as it were, the view that different peoples cannot find a common language and cannot live and work without clashes and struggle. It seemed as if the history of mankind over many thousands of years only confirmed this idea with the constant wars and chronicles full of stories of bloody internecine struggle and national oppression. Old sayings such as "every man for himself" seemed eternally true.

But socialism radically changes the nature of relations between nations. This was foreseen theoretically by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, who wrote in the Manifesto of the Communist Party: "In proportion as the exploitation of

one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.”¹

The establishment of the USSR showed that the abolition of the antagonisms between classes within a nation leads to the disappearance of the antagonisms between nations.

After the First Congress of Soviets of the USSR it was necessary to draft a Constitution and set up central—all-Union—organs of power.

In January 1923 a Constitutional Commission was formed.

The draft Constitution which it prepared was discussed and approved in the republics. At its session in July 1923 the Central Executive Committee of the USSR endorsed the Constitution and it was finally ratified by the Second Congress of Soviets of the USSR in January 1924. The first Union government, the Council of Ministers of the USSR, headed by Vladimir Lenin, began to function.

In accordance with the Constitution All-Union Commissariats (ministries) were set up to deal with foreign, military and naval affairs, foreign trade, railways, and postal and telegraphic services.

There also existed what were called United Commissariats which formed part of the government of the USSR as a whole and at the same time existed in every Union Republic (commissariats for worker-and-peasant inspection, labour, food-stuffs, finance and the supreme economic councils).

There were commissariats which only formed part of the governments of the Union Republics (republican commissariats) but were not to be found in the system of Union government: such were the commissariats for agriculture, justice, internal affairs, education, health protection and social security. Their work was most closely connected with specific features of the way of life and culture of different nations.

Just as before the formation of the USSR, every Union Republic had highest bodies of state authority and administration, such as Congresses of Soviets, Central Executive Committees and governments (Councils of People's

¹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Works*, Vol 6, p. 503.

Commissars), which could adopt laws and dealt with all aspects of state life with the exception of those that fell under the jurisdiction of the USSR.

On July 13, 1923, the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR issued an appeal *"To All the Peoples and Governments of the USSR in Connection with the Formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics"*, which stated:

"The Union state founded... on the basis of fraternal cooperation of the peoples of the Soviet Republics sets itself the aim of preserving peace with all peoples. In close interaction and working together, equal nationalities hand in hand will develop their culture and well-being and accomplish the tasks of the working people's government.

"Being a natural ally of the oppressed peoples, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics seeks friendly relations and economic cooperation with all peoples. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics considers its aim to be to further the interests of the working people of all the world. Over vast expanses from the Baltic, the Black and White seas to the Pacific Ocean, it realizes fraternity among the peoples, at the same time striving to promote friendly cooperation with the peoples of the whole world."

VII

A ROAD TAKEN TOGETHER

Sixty years have passed since the day in December 1922 when the words of a historic Declaration resounded from the rostrum of the First All-Union Congress of Soviets: "In close interaction and working together, equal nationalities hand in hand will develop their culture and well-being and accomplish the tasks of the working people's government." These were by no means easy tasks.

RESTORATION OF THE ECONOMY, INDUSTRIALIZATION AND CULTURAL ADVANCE

The restoration of the national economy which invading armies had destroyed and raising it to the prewar level required a tremendous amount of hard work and a fairly long period of time: the prewar level was attained on the whole by 1926, even later in some sectors of the economy. But in view of the scale of destruction and the fact that the capitalist powers did everything possible to maintain an economic blockade of the Soviet Union, this period was not really such a long one.

In those years of hard work the built-in advantages of the state structure of the USSR manifested themselves most strikingly. The first was the possibility of concentrating united efforts on solving the particular problems of general importance which were the most urgent ones at the particular moment and to tackle them precisely where they arose. From 1922 to 1926, for example, 60 per cent of all the resources allocated for the iron-and-steel industry was spent on restoring the iron-and-steel industry of the Ukraine, which was at that time the country's principal metallurgical centre. In turn,

the Ukraine supplied its coal and grain to many regions which badly needed both. Armenia, which had suffered particularly great damage in the years of foreign intervention, Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan regularly received considerable financial assistance from the Russian Federation as well as machinery, industrial plant and consumer goods. The budgets of the majority of the national republics at that time were small and had a deficit. So the Russian Federation and the Ukraine contributed more to the USSR state budget and received less from it than the other republics.¹ Soviet people regarded this as something quite natural: new and hitherto unknown moral norms of relations between peoples were asserting themselves, breaking down the barriers of distrust and enmity that had been built up over the centuries.

The restoration of the economy was followed by the *industrialization* of the country, the establishment of modern industries, of large factories and mills in all republics. Collective farms making wide use of machinery emerged in the villages in place of the multitude of fragmented and economically feeble small holdings. Farm labour became immeasurably more productive and efficient.

In those years mutual assistance and cooperation between the peoples were manifested with fresh force. As in previous years, backward regions received from the all-Union budget a considerable part of the resources they needed for their industrial development. In Turkmenia, for instance, in the period from 1926 to 1932 subsidies from the all-Union budget amounted to more than half the republican budget. In Tajikistan at times these subsidies comprised 80 per cent of the republican budget. The industrial and cultural centres such as Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov and Gorky sent specialists to Central Asia, the Caucasus and other national regions and helped them to train skilled workers, technicians and engineers. Thanks to such aid the rates of industrial development in many national republics—Byelorussia,

¹ In 1925 the RSFSR had 69 per cent of the total population but was allotted 67 per cent of the total expenditure of the USSR budget. For the Ukraine the respective percentages were 20 and 17. By contrast the percentages for the Transcaucasian Federation were 4 and 7.5. The average budget expenditure per head of the population in 1924/25 was 2.80 roubles for the USSR as a whole and 5.40 roubles for Transcaucasia.

Tajikistan, Kirghizia and Georgia—even surpassed the average all-Union rate.

The great strides the country took from backwardness to progress were particularly striking in the regions that had until recently lagged centuries behind the developed ones. Modern factories and mills appeared in large republics where industry formerly was represented by a few primitive workshops.

Great cultural progress was made within a very short period of time. In the Central Asian republics, for instance, where the level of literacy before the Revolution was from 2 to 4 per cent, it reached 79 or 83 per cent by the end of the thirties. Medical services were organized in all the national republics. Many institutes of higher education, research establishments, theatres, recreation centres and libraries sprang up everywhere. Peoples who had not had even written languages of their own now had their own literatures. Where before the Revolution one would have had difficulty finding two or three literate persons per 1,000 residents, where illiteracy and ignorance reigned, a native intelligentsia—teachers, doctors, agronomists, engineers, scientists from among the local population—appeared and in numbers which any civilized state could envy.

The task of overcoming backwardness was an urgent one for the country as a whole and doubly and trebly urgent and difficult for many peoples. A decisive role in accomplishing this task was played by the fraternal mutual assistance of the peoples united in a single state.

In the drive to reorganize agriculture along socialist lines, to carry out industrialization and a cultural revolution all the peoples worked together making rational use of the resources available. It was common work for the common good.

As years went by the gap between the less developed and more developed peoples steadily diminished and was eventually closed. All the Soviet Socialist Republics realized their rights and enjoyed not only legal but also factual equality.

A TEST OF STRENGTH

The strong bonds between the Soviet peoples stood the test of time not only in peace time, but also in the severe testing time of war. In 1941, when Hitler Germany treacher-

ously attacked the Soviet Union, all its peoples rose as one man to rebuff the enemy who had broken into their home, their socialist homeland. Both the western republics, which became fields of fierce battle and were temporarily occupied by the enemy, and the eastern republics thousands of kilometres away from the front rallied together and equally displayed their firm will for victory. And they won.

After the war the Soviet people again had to exert every effort to eliminate its consequences. Such are the specific features of the history of the USSR. Of the 65 years that have passed since the October Revolution about 20 years were spent repelling enemy invasion and on postwar reconstruction. The task of reconstruction was exceedingly difficult: the German fascist invaders had burned down and destroyed 1,710 towns and settlements and more than 70,000 villages, they demolished 32,000 industrial enterprises and 65,000 kilometres of railway track.

The whole country helped to restore industry and agriculture in the regions that had suffered under enemy occupation. Countless trains with building materials, metal, tractors and other farm machinery, foodstuffs and manufactures, pedigree cattle and seeds were dispatched to the Ukraine, the North Caucasus, the Baltic region, Byelorussia, Moldavia and the western regions of the Russian Federation.

The hard trials of wartime and postwar restoration of the towns and villages destroyed and of the war-ravaged economy, work that lasted five years, became yet another trial of strength for the community of the peoples of the Soviet Union. From that test they emerged even stronger than ever.¹

¹ In later years the economy and culture of all the republics grew steadily. From 1950 to 1980 industrial output in the USSR rose 12-fold. In 1982 the Soviet Union's share of world industrial output was 20 per cent compared with one per cent in the year the Soviet Union was formed.

Here are some other figures:

By 1980 industrial output was 21 times greater than in 1940.

Over the same period the number of doctors rose from 155,000 to 993,000 and the number of hospital beds from 791,000 to 3,327,000.

Schools giving a general education had 35,600,000 pupils in 1940, 44,300,000 in 1980. The number of higher school students rose from 800,000 to 5,200,000 and that of students at vocational and specialized secondary schools from 1,700,000 to 8,600,000.

In the same period the number of public libraries rose from 95,400 to 131,700.

1922-40: THE EMERGENCE OF NEW UNION AND AUTONOMOUS REPUBLICS

The year of the formation of the USSR, 1922, was the starting point for the further development of the Soviet national-state structure. Changes took place in Central Asia, in particular. As has been said, in 1922 there were the Turkestan Autonomous Republic, which was part of the RSFSR, as well as the Bokhara and Khoresm People's Soviet Republics, which at that time had not yet joined the USSR.

All these were multi-national formations and each of their peoples in the interests of their fuller and more natural development inevitably faced the historically progressive task of setting up *national* Soviet states on these territories. Appropriate scientific studies were conducted which made it possible to compile an accurate ethnographic map of Central Asia. That is why national-state demarcation of the peoples was carried out in Central Asia in 1924 in accordance with their wishes. As a result, sovereign national Soviet states emerged: the *Uzbek, Turkmen, Tajik, Kirghiz and Kara-Kalpak Republics*.

In 1925 Congresses of Soviets of the Uzbek and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics asked the USSR to admit them to membership. The 3rd All-Union Congress of Soviets in May 1925 granted their request. (Tajikistan and Kirghizia were Autonomous Republics at that time.) Tajikistan was transformed into a Union Republic and joined the USSR in 1929.

At the end of 1936 a new Constitution of the USSR was adopted. Along with the cardinal social, economic and political changes that had taken place in the 1920s and 1930s, it embodied in law the changes in the national-state sphere. In accordance with the 1936 Constitution the Kirghiz and Kazakh Autonomous Republics were transformed into Union Republics and admitted to the USSR. At about the same time, Transcaucasian Federation, which had fulfilled its historic mission, also underwent modification. In the 15 years of its existence each of its constituent republics had attained a high level of economic and cultural development. So in

Having been industrialized, the Soviet Republics are today exporting their manufactures to dozens of foreign countries: Byelorussia to 90 countries, Georgia to 80, Uzbekistan to 70, Azerbaijan to 65, Tataria and Chuvashia to 80 and Buryatia to 54.

accordance with the new Constitution Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia entered the USSR directly, as Union Republics.

In July 1940 Soviet power was restored in the Baltic area as a result of popular revolutions in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. At the request of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian peoples they were admitted to the USSR as Soviet Socialist Republics.

From 1924 to 1940 the Ukrainian SSR incorporated the Moldavian Autonomous Republic, which lay on the left bank of the Dniester. A greater part of the territory inhabited by Moldavians—Bessarabia—on the right bank of the Dniester had been unlawfully occupied by Romania in 1918. This occupation had never been recognized by the Soviet Union. In 1940 by agreement with Romania the Moldavian regions of Bessarabia were reunited with the USSR. Thus the *Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic* came into being.

THE USSR TODAY: CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES OF ITS FEDERAL ORGANIZATION

According to the 1979 Census more than 100 nations and nationalities dwell in the Soviet Union.¹ Of these nations and nationalities 22 number more than one million each and 30 vary in size from 100,000 to one million people.

As the new USSR Constitution adopted in 1977 states: "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is an integral, federal, multi-national state formed on the principle of socialist federalism as a result of the free self-determination of nations and the voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics."

The USSR unites 15 Union Republics.²

Within the jurisdiction of the USSR are the admission of new republics into it, the demarcation and protection of state boundaries, and representation in international relations. The highest bodies of state authority and administration of the USSR pursue a uniform social and economic policy, determine the main lines of scientific and technical research and

¹ On January 1, 1982, the USSR had a population of 268,800,000.

² The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Uzbek, Kazakh, Georgian, Azerbaijan, Lithuanian, Moldavian, Latvian, Kirghiz, Tajik, Armenian, Turkmen and Estonian Soviet Socialist Republics.

general measures for the rational exploitation and conservation of natural resources, draft and approve the budget of the USSR and manage a single monetary and credit system. The laws of the USSR are equally valid in all Union Republics.

A Union Republic is a sovereign Soviet socialist state that has united with other Soviet Republics in the USSR. It retains the right of free secession from the USSR.

Every Union Republic has its own constitution and highest bodies of authority. It exercises independent authority and ensures economic and social development on its territory, demarcates it into regions, areas and districts and takes decisions on other matters relating to its administrative and territorial structure. A Union Republic has the right to enter into relations with other states, to conclude treaties with them, exchange diplomatic and consular representatives and take part in the work of international organizations.

The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic embraces the majority nation of the federation, the Russian people, and the other nationalities living on its territory. According to the federation's 1978 Constitution it embraces 16 Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, five Autonomous Regions and 11 Autonomous Areas.

Autonomous Republics are also to be found in the Uzbek, Georgian and Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republics and Autonomous Regions—in the Georgian, Azerbaijan and Tajik Soviet Socialist Republics.

Each Autonomous Republic has its own Constitution and highest bodies of authority.

All the Union and Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions and Autonomous Areas are ensured representation in the highest bodies of state authority of the USSR. The highest body of state authority of the USSR—the USSR Supreme Soviet—consists of two chambers, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities, which are equal and have equal numbers of deputies.

Deputies to the Soviet of the Union are elected from 750 constituencies of equal size, while deputies to the Soviet of Nationalities are elected according to a principle ensuring the equal representation of every Republic, Autonomous Region and Area.

Representation in the Soviet of Nationalities is as follows: 32 deputies from each Union Republic, 11 deputies from each

Autonomous Republic, five deputies from each Autonomous Region and one deputy from each Autonomous Area—750 deputies in all. This ensures all national republics, regions and areas equal representation irrespective of the size of the population. For example, the Union Republic of the Russian Federation, which in the 1979 elections had about 97 million voters, and the Union Republic of Estonia, with a little over one million voters, are represented in the Soviet of Nationalities by an equal number of deputies—32. The Bashkir Autonomous Republic with nearly 2,500,000 voters, and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, where the number of voters does not exceed 115,000, each have 11 deputies in the Soviet of Nationalities. The Khakass Autonomous Region (323,000 voters) and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (56,000 voters) each have five deputies in the Soviet of Nationalities.

As may be seen, the national-state system of the USSR resulting from the voluntary union of sovereign nations is a flexible one; its purpose is to ensure the most favourable conditions for the life of each of the peoples forming this system.

ONE OF MANY

The correctness of this statement could be proved by describing all the peoples, national republics and regions of the country. Space does not permit this. So we shall look at one republic, taking it as an example.

Kabardin-Balkaria is not remarkable for the size of its territory or population or any special achievements. It is a typical Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. An equal among equals. It is not well known to people abroad. But this republic has existed—it has indeed prospered—for already more than 60 years. The republic lies on the northern flank of the Greater Caucasus. In the South rise mighty mountains, among them the famous Elbrus. In the North-East lies the fertile valley of the Terek and its tributaries. The republic's territory is small in size—12,500 square kilometres. In 1979 it had a population of 667,000. It is noteworthy that in 1921, the year of its formation, there were only 210,000 people living there. The Kabardins and Balkars constitute 55 per cent of the population. Russians, Ukrainians, Ossetians, Circassians,

Karachais and people of other nationalities live alongside them. An historian who visited the Caucasus at the end of last century wrote of the Kabardin-Balkars: "Remote from cultural life, this small people has grown quite wild and stupid and shows no interest in intellectual pursuits." Today Kabardin-Balkaria is a republic with a mighty modern industry, including machine-tool building, engineering, non-ferrous metal and chemical industries, instrument-building and electrical engineering, a highly-mechanized agriculture, and a well-developed culture and technology.

In the past 15 years industrial output there has almost quadrupled and the amount of energy available per land worker has trebled.

A land which up to the time of the Revolution had only a few schools is now justly proud of its university, Institute of History, Philology and Economics, and its Geophysical Institute high in the mountains. In 1981 the republic opened an agricultural and land improvement institute.

The social structure of the population of the republic has radically changed. Whereas in 1921 rural residents constituted the overwhelming majority of the population (96 per cent), today more than half the total are urban dwellers. The republic has its own working class, constituting about two-thirds of all the gainfully employed population.

According to the 1920 Census only about two per cent of adult Kabardins and less than one per cent of the Balkars could read and write. After the October Revolution Kabardinian and Balkarian alphabets were evolved and press publications and literature in their national languages emerged. The republic now has 100 per cent literacy. Out of every 1,000 people there 700 have a higher, specialized secondary or secondary education. In the past 15 years the number of specialists has increased by 170 per cent and reached the impressive figure of 68,000.

Tremendous changes have taken place in the people's way of life. Their real incomes are growing and so are the payments and benefits they receive from the public consumption funds.¹ Since 1967 the average wages of factory and

¹ The public consumption funds are a part of the national income of a socialist society which is distributed in addition to wages in the form of various benefits and services with a view to more fully meeting the material and cultural requirements of people irrespective of the quantity and quality of their work—*Ed.*

office workers have risen by 70 per cent and the earnings of collective farmers by 110 per cent. In the 10th five-year plan period alone (1976-80) more than 100,000 people have moved into new modern flats.

State authority in the republic is exercised by about 5,700 deputies to the Soviets of People's Deputies representing all social groups. In all their activities the Soviets are aided by public-spirited voluntary helpers—over 90,000 industrial workers, collective farmers, office workers and professional people. In other words, one in every five adults takes part in managing the affairs of the republic.

Kabardin-Balkaria has its own Parliament—the Supreme Soviet of the republic, and its own government, the Council of Ministers. Representatives of the republic are elected to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR and to both chambers of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

* * *

On the map of the USSR today we see 15 Union and 20 Autonomous Republics, eight Autonomous Regions and eleven Autonomous Areas. Round the wheat ears on the USSR state emblem are twined fifteen ribbons, symbols of the Union Republics. Along with the red flag of the Soviet Union, on which emblems of labour and peace—the hammer and sickle—and a five-pointed star are embroidered in gold, 15 flags of the Union Republics flutter in streets and squares on national holidays.

The Soviet national economy, which forms an integral interlinked complex, is a firm basis for further drawing the nations together. The economic bonds between the republics, based on socialist cooperation and specialization in production, are growing ever closer. The economy of each republic is developing as an integral part of the economy of the Union.

All the Soviet nations are homogeneous in their social structure; they consist of friendly classes and social groups.

In each of the Soviet peoples common Soviet traditions and common features of their outlook are making themselves felt.

At the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1981 Leonid Brezhnev said: "Experience shows that the intensive economic and social development of each of our republics speeds up the process of

their coming closer together in every field. National cultures are thriving and enriching one another, and we are witnessing the moulding of the culture of the whole Soviet people—a new social and international community. In our country this process is taking place as it should take place under socialism—on the basis of equality, fraternal cooperation, and free will. The Party makes sure that these Leninist principles of its nationalities policy are observed. We will never depart from them.”¹

All Soviet people are citizens of a single state, which celebrates its 60th anniversary in December 1982.

¹ *Documents and Resolutions. The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, APN Publishers, Moscow, 1981, p. 74

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